

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6403

INFO AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL DANANG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 15365

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, VS

SUBJECT: SENATE ELECTION PREPARATIONS IN MR IV

FOLLOWING MSG REC FROM AMCONSUL CAN THO ON AUG 23 ACTION
EMBASSY SAIGON REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO:

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CAN THO 0672

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT VS

SUBJECT: SENATE ELECTION PREPARATIONS IN MR IV

1. SUMMARY: PREPARATIONS IN THE DELTA FOR THE AUGUST 26
SENATE ELECTIONS ARE MOVING FORWARD MECHANICALLY. THE
CAMPAIGN HAS PRECIPITATED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF STANDARD
ELECTORAL ACTIVITY BUT HAS GENERATED LITTLE REAL ENTHUSIASM.
MR IV COMMANDER NGHI HAS ORDERED A MINIMUM VOTER TURN-OUT OF
90 PERCENT. HIS PROVINCE CHIEFS ARE MAKING LIBERAL USE OF GVN
ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL TO INSURE THAT THIS GOAL - AND
THAT OF A DECISIVE SHOWING FOR SLATES ONE AND TWO - ARE MET. SOME
INTEREST ATTENDS THE QUESTIONS OF DEMOCRACY PARTY ABILITY TO
MARSHALL VOTES FOR THE TWO GOVERNMENT SLATES AND THE DEGREE OF
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GVN SUCCESS IN ASSURING AN OVERWHELMING VICTORY FOR ITS OWN

PEOPLE. ALTHOUGH SLATE THREE IS MAKING AN EFFORT TO PUBLICIZE ITSELF, SLATE FOUR HAS BEEN MORIBUND FROM THE BEGINNING. NO RELIGIOUS OR MINORITY GROUPS ARE SEEN TO BE ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE THE ELECTION OUTCOME. THE VC ARE MAKING ISOLATED AND FEEBLE EFFORTS TO DISRUPT THE ELECTION DAY PROCEEDINGS. END SUMMARY

1. PUBLIC REACTION. DELTA VOTERS SEEM GENERALLY APATHETIC TO THE 1973 SENATE ELECTIONS DESPITE OFFICIAL EFFORTS TO GENERATE ENTHUSIASM. PREOCCUPIED WITH WORRIES OVER STEEPLY RISING PRICES AND WAR-RELATED CONCERNS, AND ANTICIPATING AN ELECTION WHOSE RESULTS ARE FORE-KNOWN, THE PUBLIC RANGES IN ITS ATTITUDE FROM INATTENTIVENESS TO CYNICISM. THE RICE PRICE, INCREASING TRANSPORTATION COSTS, AND THE NOW-DIMINISHED VAT ARE ALL SAID TO BE TOPICS OF GREATER POPULAR IMPORTANCE THAN THE FORTHCOMING SENATE ELECTIONS.

2. OFFICIAL ACTIVITIES AND ATTITUDES. PROVINCE OFFICIALS - NO DOUBT MINDFUL OF MR IV COMMANDER NGHI'S RECENT INSTRUCTIONS ON THE MATTER - SEEM PRINCIPALLY CONCERNED WITH INSURING A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF BALLOTS CAST AND MAINTAINING A SUITABLE DISTANCE BETWEEN WINNERS AND LOSERS. THE CHUONG THIEN AND VINH BINH PROVINCE REPS REPORT THAT PROVINCE OFFICIALS' MAIN CONCERN IS ASSURING AN ADEQUATE VOTER TURN-OUT. IN AN XUYEN, DISTRICT OFFICIALS SAY PRIVATELY THAT THE PROVINCE CHIEF HAS INSTRUCTED THEM TO PERSUADE AT LEAST 90 PERCENT OF THOSE QUALIFIED TO GO TO THE POLLS ON ELECTION DAY. HE HAS REPORTEDLY TOLD THEM TO MAKE SURE THAT SLATES ONE AND TWO WIN, AND THAT SLATE TWO DOES NOT RECEIVE MORE THAN 20 PERCENT FEWER VOTES THAN SLATE ONE. IN VINH LONG AND ELSEWHERE RD CADRE ARE REGISTERING VOTERS AND CONCURRENTLY ENROLLING DEMOCRACY PARTY MEMBERS, IN EVERY PROVINCE THE AUTHORITIES HAVE WORKED ASSIDUOUSLY TO SEE THAT POSTERS FOR THE TWO GOVERNMENT SLATES ARE WIDELY DISTRIBUTED. POSTERS FOR SLATES THREE AND FOUR, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE DISPERSED MORE SPARSELY (AS IN VINH LONG AND KIEN HOA) OR NOT AT ALL (AN XUYEN, CHUONG THIEN, PARTS OF KIEN TUONG).

3. SOME PROVINCE OFFICIALS SEE A SERIOUS PURPOSE IN THE ELECTIONS. IN KIEN HOA, FOR EXAMPLE, OFFICIALS SAY THAT A HEAVY VOTE FOR SLATES ONE AND TWO WILL DEMONSTRATE PUBLIC CONFIDENTIAL

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SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT THIEU AT A TIME WHEN STABILITY IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT. SOME BA XUYEN OFFICIALS SEE THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN, DECLARING THAT EVEN MODEST SUPPORT FOR SLATE THREE OR FOUR WOULD CONSTITUTE A MORAL DEFEAT FOR THE GVN. IN VINH LONG, PROVINCE OFFICIALS ARE SAID TO BE WATCHING TO SEE HOW EFFICIENTLY THE DP FUNCTIONS IN HELPING THE RD CADRE GET OUT THE VOTE.

4. THE SLATES. (A) PLATFORMS. PROVINCIAL AMERICANS REPORTS UNIFORMLY THAT THEY DETECT NO DIFFERENCES AMONG THE PLATFORMS OF THE FOUR SLATES NOR HAVE THEY SEEN ANY POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC ISSUES ARISE ELSEWHERE IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. A VINH LONG CAP TIEN MEMBER TOLD OUR VICE CONSUL THERE THAT POPULAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIFFERENCES AMONG SLATES IS LIMITED TO THE KNOWLEDGE THAT ALL THE SLATES ARE PRO-GVN AND ANTI-COMMUNIST AND THAT PRESIDENT THIEU WANTS SLATES ONE AND TWO TO WIN. THE VINH BINH PROV REP SAYS THAT PEOPLE IN HIS AREA ARE CONCERNED NOT ABOUT ISSUES BUT PERSONALITIES, AND CITES SUPPORT IN HEAVILY KHMER VINH BINH FOR SLATE TWO BECAUSE OF THE SLATE'S INCLUSION OF COL. KIM KHANH, HEAD OF THE CAMBODIAN AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE GENERAL. (HE'S NOT MUCH, THEY SAY, BUT HE IS CAMBODIAN.) THE SLATES THEMSELVES HAVE DONE LITTLE TO ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES WITH REAL - AND DISTINCT - ISSUES. WHEN SLATE LEADERS SPOKE IN CAN THO AUGUST 16 THEY CONFINED THEMSELVES TO PLATITUDES - A BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTIC OF POLITICAL MAN NOT UNKNOWN IN OTHER COUNTRIES. SLATE ONE LEADER TRAN MINH TUNG SAID HIS PEOPLE STOOD FOR THE BUILDING OF FREEDOM AND PEACE FOR ALL THE PEOPLE. TRAN VAN LAM, ELEPHANT SLATE HEAD, DECLARED HIMSELF FOR PEACE AND A HIGHER STANDARD OF LIVING. HE ADDED THAT PEACE MUST RESULT FROM A PROCESS OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND NOT BE IMPOSED FROM WITHOUT. SLATE THREE CHIEF BUI BINH BAN INTRODUCED RUNNING MATE DOAN MINH QUANG, WHO WAS MORE SPECIFIC. HE CALLED FOR AN EARLY END TO THE WAR SO THAT THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE COULD BUILD A FULLER LIFE. HE SAID THAT AGRICULTURE MUST BE THE BASIS FOR ANY NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY, AND THAT TAXES SHOULD AIM AT SOCIAL EQUITY. HE STATED THAT CAN THO SHOULD BE A SITE FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND A PORT FOR THE ENTIRE REGION. LIST FOUR LEADER NGUYEN VAN HAN CALLED FOR RECONCILITATION TO BE EFFECTED BY BASING POPULAR RIGHTS ON INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS. HE ADDED AN APPEAL TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY SO THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE CAN DETERMINE THEIR OWN DESTINY. WE SEE NO INDICATION THAT PEOPLE APPRECIATE -
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OR ARE EVEN AWARE OF - SLATE THREE'S SOMEWHAT MORE SPECIFIC
APPROACH TO CAMPAI
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ACTION EA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 15365

(C) OUT-OF-PROVINCE SPEAKERS. THE DELTA HAS SEEN SOME BUT NOT MANY OUT-OF-PROVINCE SPEAKERS COME DOWN TO STUMP FOR PARTICULAR SLATES. THE FOUR SLATE LEADERS SPOKE IN CAN THO AUGUST 16 (USING UP THIRTY MINUTES AMONG THEM). LISTS ONE AND TWO HAVE SENT TWO SAIGON REPRESENTATIVES TO VISIT CAO DAI LEADERS IN BEN TRE (KIEN HOA). THE VINH LONG DEMOCRACY PARTY HAS TRIED TO GET SAIGON SPEAKERS TO COME DOWN AND STUMP ON BEHALF OF SLATES ONE AND TWO, BUT HAVE NOT AS FAR AS WE KNOW BEEN SUCCESSFUL. OTHER PROVINCES (KIEN TUONG, BAC LIEU, BA XUYEN, SADEC, AN XUYEN, CHUONG THIEN) REPORT NO OUTSIDERS HAVE VISITED THEM. EVEN DEMOCRACY SLATE CANDIDATE COL. NGUYEN VAN NGUU, FORMER CHUONG THIEN PROVINCE CHIEF, HAS NOT GONE BACK TO VISIT HIS OLD PROVINCE.

(D) INTRA-PROVINCE SPEAKERS. PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS AND OTHERS, HOWEVER, HAVE EXPLAINED THE ELECTION AND SPOKEN FOR PARTICULAR SLATES IN THEIR OWN AREAS. CHAU DOC OFFICIALS, FOR EXAMPLE, HAD VISITED OVER 20 OF 57 VILLAGES TO EXPLAIN ELECTION PROCEDURES AS OF AUGUST 20. IN SADEC, RALLIES AND SPEECHES OSTENSIBLY AIMED AT ENCOURAGING VOTING HAVE BEEN PLUGS FOR THE DEMOCRACY PARTY.

IN KIEN TUONG, LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE FIRST THREE OF THE FOUR LISTS HAVE VISITED THE PROVINCE CAPITAL.

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5. DEMOCRACY PARTY. THE DP HAS EVERYWHERE MOBILIZED ITS RESOURCES TO SUPPORT SLATES ONE AND TWO . (EXCEPTIONS ARE VINH BINH, WHERE THE PARTY IS STILL NOT ORGANIZED, AND HOA HAO- DOMINATED AN GIANG, WHERE THE DP SEEMS TO HAVE DEFERRED TO THE HOA HAO SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SDP). THE SDP IS CARRYING THE BALL THERE FOR SLATES ONE AND TWO.) ALTHOUGH NO ONE DOUBTS LISTS ONE AND TWO WILL WIN, SOME SEE IN THE ELECTIONS THE FIRST TEST OF DP ABILITY TO GENERATE SUPPORT FOR ITS CANDIDATES. DP ACTIVITY HAS BEEN FAIRLY EXTENSIVE IN MOST PROVINCES. VINH LONG DP LEADERS HAVE GIVEN SPEECHES, HOLD STUDY SESSIONS, AND OVERSEE THE HANGING OF POSTERS. IN BA XUYEN, THE PARTY HAS ORGANIZED RALLIES IN SEVEN OF THE EIGHT DISTRICT TOWN. OTHER PROVINCES REPORT SIMILAR DP ACTIVITIES.

5. OTHER PARTIES. WE DISCERN NO INVOLVEMENT IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN ON THE PART OF ANY OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES, WHETHER LEGAL OR NOT. THE LIST THREE REP IN DINH TUONG TOLD US THAT SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE AND OTHER, NOW ILLEGAL PARTY MEMBERS THERE WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT LIST THREE BUT ARE AFRAID. A LEADING CAP TIEN MEMBER IN MY THO SAID OPPOSITION PARTIES WOULD NOT SUPPORT SLATES THREE AND FOUR BECAUSE VICTORY FOR SLATES ONE AND TWO IS INEVITABLE.

7. HOA HAO ATTITUDES. HOA HAO INTEREST IN THE SENATE ELECTIONS SEEMS TO BE LIMITED TO ASSURING CONTINUED HOA HAO (AS OPPOSED TO DEMOCRACY PARTY) CONTROL OF THE ELECTORATE IN AREAS OF SPECIAL. HOA HAO STRENGTH RATHER THAN IN SUPPORTING OPPOSITION SLATES OR PARTICULAR CANDIDATES. WE NOTED ABOVE THE AN GIANG SITUATION. IN CHAU DOC, TOO, HOA HAO VILLAGE AND HAMLET LEADERS HAVE SHOWN THEMSELVES RELUCTANT TO WORK ON BEHALF OF THE DEMOCRACY PARTY. THERE ARE TWO HOA HAO SENATORIAL CANDIDATES. NGUYEN VAN THO, A WELL-KNOWN LUONG TRONG TUONG FACTION MEMBER, IS ON SLATE TWO. PHAM MINH QUANG, CHAU DOC PROVINCE COUNCIL MEMBER, IS ON SLATE THREE. THO IS THE MORE PRESTIGIOUS FIGURE AND SHOULD BE OF MORE VALUE TO HIS SLATE THAN QUANG TO SLATE THREE.

8. VC ACTIVITIES. THERE ARE SOME REPORTS FROM INSECURE OR SPARSELY-POPULATED AREAS THAT THE VC INTEND TO DISRUPT THE ELECTIONS. THE GIA RAI DISTRICT (BAC LIEU) PEOPLE'S MOTIVATION SERVICE CHIEF SAID VC IN HIS AREA ARE URGING PEOPLE NOT TO VOTE
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AND TAKING AWAY THEIR VOTING REGISTRATION CARDS. CHUONG THIEN RD CADRE SAY THE SAME IS HAPPENING IN INSEUCRE VILLAGES IN THAT PROVINCE. THE KIEN THONG PROVINCE REP REPORTS INDICATIONS THAT THE VC INTEND TO DISRUPT THE ELECTIONS BUT HAS HEARD OF NO CONCRETE PLANS TO DO SO. CORPS COMMANDER NGHI HAS ORDERED HIS PROVINCE CHIEFS TO TAKE MEASURES TO THWART SUCH VC INITIATIVES. WE ESTIMATE VC DISRUPTIONS WILL BE NO MORE THAN MINIMALLY SUCCESSFUL.
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